

The Rebuilding of Duke University's School of Law, 1925-1947

Part II

BY ROBERT F. DURDEN*

Some faculty members at Duke in the early 1930s believed that Justin Miller aspired to become the president of Duke University. That may or may not have been true. Some people—students and a few anonymous journalists—expressed the opinion, publicly in the case of the latter group, that he should be president and would make a first-rate successor to William Preston Few. What the truth was about Miller's own purposes and motives remains murky and may never be known. The clear fact was, however, that he played a central and somewhat mysterious role in a complex academic drama that culminated in 1934 but began several years earlier.

Miller's administrative style became clear as soon as he arrived at Duke in the summer of 1930. Energetic and ambitious, as much for the Duke law school as for himself, he was articulate, extremely well organized, and highly efficient. Letters to him received prompt, careful replies, and in them he often displayed considerable tact and diplomacy. He had a knack for combining candor, and sometimes stern advice to young would-be law professors, with a winning graciousness.¹

That he immediately began bombarding Few and Robert L. Flowers, the other two members of the administrative committee for the law school, with all sorts of memorandums was hardly surprising, for there was much to be done for a rapidly expanding school in a new building on a new campus. Strong pleas for quick expansion of the law library from Miller and William R. Roalfe, the law librarian, met with consistent approval from Few and Flowers. Significant support for library-building and an understanding of the library's centrality in the academic enterprise had been hallmarks of Trinity College under both Presidents John C. Kilgo and Few, and those policies were carried over and even expanded in Duke University. In addition to the regular annual appropriations of \$25,000 for the law library,

*Dr. Durden is professor, Department of History, Duke University, Durham. He is currently engaged in research for a history of Duke University and also one of the Duke Endowment. For Part I of "The Rebuilding of Duke University's School of Law, 1925-1947," see the *North Carolina Historical Review*, LXVI (July, 1989), 321-352.

¹See, for example, Justin Miller to T. A. Adams, September 24, 26, 1930, Records of the Duke University Law School, Files of Dean Justin Miller, 1930-1934, Duke University Archives, Duke University Library, Durham, hereinafter cited as Miller Papers.

